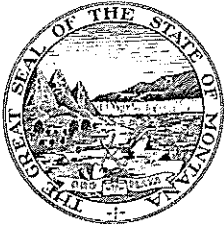


CHOTEAU  
ACTIVITIES

DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



BRIAN SCHWEITZER  
GOVERNOR

JOAN MILES  
DIRECTOR

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STATE OF MONTANA

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4/3/2006

TO: Louie King, CEO  
Sandy Hodgkiss, Board Chair

FROM: Lori Wertz, Quality Improvement Specialist

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Evaluation for FY 06

Please find the attached review summary and findings for this fiscal year. I would like to thank the staff for their ongoing support of people with disabilities and of their community. It is indeed a pleasure to work with a group of such dedicated and honest professionals. The people in your program are truly respected as the unique and wonderful people they are—and your attention to detail and quick response to meet issues as they arise are dually noted and appreciated.

*There are no follow-up issues which require your attention as a result of this review.* Your community has many strengths, not the least of which is an available medical facility and a wonderful working relationship with those professionals. The overall safety and neighborly atmosphere of Choteau creates natural supports for folks that sometimes don't exist in larger cities. Disruption of those supports due to significant and public behavioral outbursts can also strain relationships for the agency, creating difficulties in both networking and even hiring staff. Choteau Activities has not in the past served people in the 'intensive' service designation. To that end, if the agency wishes to port or screen individuals who are considered 'intensive' (folks from MDC will automatically carry that designation for either lack of skill or behavioral issues), there are some additional contract requirements that need to be met which have not been required of your agency to date. Specifically, staff need to be enrolled in DDCPT or its equivalent within 30 days of hire (or in this case, to any staff who have not been certified). One consumer ported out of Choteau this last year and would have fallen into this category. DDCPT may have given the staff a better array of tools to help work through the issues that arose from that placement. It is a credit to your staff that they were able to provide the level of support they offered throughout that time. It is also suggested that Choteau consider certification of a DDCPT proctor in order to assure that the staff have ongoing access to the curriculum. Proctorship and the initial training is quite lengthy but can be provided from the Regional Office.

Once again, it has been a privilege to work with all the folks at Choteau Activities. I am looking forward to this next year as you seek out new and expanded service opportunities. As always, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

**Choteau Activities, Inc.**  
**Quality Assurance review**

**Scope of Review**

Period of Review: FY 06

Dates of Review: Conducted through the month of March 2006

Reviewers: Lori Wertz, Quality Improvement Specialist/Developmental Disabilities Program

**General Areas**

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**Significant Events from the agency**

The following list is but a sample of the many changes and strides taken by the agency this year: Hired a new Executive Director, Sent two employees to the Direct Care Conference, Purchased a new van, State Fair activities, had a consumer ( ) recognized in Acantha (local newspaper) as #1 Bulldog fan, Participation in the rate pilot, Attended Mona Monopoly and participated in the Provider Fair—in addition to other notations made throughout this report. **(QAOS 1)**

It is also noted that there currently exists one port vacancy in the agency at this time. The staff have done a very conscientious job of soliciting to fill that vacancy, and are being very thorough in their research of potential applicants. As yet, no one has agreed to move but it is hoped that the vacancy will be filled soon.

**Policies & administrative (DDP) directives**

Choteau policies and procedures were reviewed at the last evaluation period. Only significant changes were reviewed this year. The biggest change to policy was the addition of the incident management policy effective under state contract on July 1, 2005. It is noted that this agency has embraced this policy as a philosophy and was one of the few agencies in this region to have the policy fully implemented by the July 1 target date.

**Licensing**

Licensing, sanitation, fire marshall and related inspections were current and up to date. There were no outstanding licensure issues noted.

**Agency internal communication systems**

Communication is a strength for this agency. The agency focus is not only on consumer health and safety but clearly includes individual wants and needs. In fact, agency staff are to be commended for their attention to detail and their ability to determine consumer needs through the slightest variations in behavior. This reporter has observed first hand the staff energy and willingness to research any option that might provide a clue as to what might meet a consumer's needs. The folks that are served by this agency are truly accepted for who they are, respected as members of the community and treated with kindness. One supported living consumer is an active member of the Board and provides direct input regarding services and consumer needs.

Satisfaction surveys for staff and consumer satisfaction were conducted. The agency takes this feedback seriously and uses the comments from the surveys to better plan for the future.

### **Accreditation**

Accreditation is no longer required under the state contract, although Choteau still uses many of the accreditation guidelines as a means of providing services.

### **Fiscal (results of A133 audit, referrals to Medicaid Fraud or QAD review, client funds, & record keeping)**

Choteau Activities consistently meets timelines for year-end reports. There have been no concerns raised as to client funds or record keeping. The A133 audit is not required as the agency does not exceed the \$500, 000 of contracted dollars.

### **Appendix I**

Appendix I as it relates to the rates pilot program no longer tracks specific staff to client ratios. As the rates pilot progresses, the staff support hours will be tracked against the services provided to ensure that consumer needs are being met. For this past year, it is noted that health and safety needs of the consumers served by this agency have been met.

## **SPECIFIC SERVICES REVIEWED**

### **A. RESIDENTIAL**

#### **Accomplishments**

Choteau provides the following residential programs: group home, transitional (congregate supported living), and supported living (independent living). Although for the purposes of evaluation, these services are separated, it is well noted that this agency acts in harmony to provide all of the supports needed for the folks served. Examples of accomplishments residually this year include: reduced turnover in the group home, consumer trips (including Disneyland and a Seahawks game), graduation of an individual from group home to congregate supported living, group outings to the Gates of the Mountains, and ongoing skiing, fishing and rafting trips through Eaglemount.

#### **Programmatic Deficiencies--current**

No significant programmatic deficiencies are noted for the purpose of this review. Earlier this year, the agency struggled with the loss of their CEO and it is noted that all of the staff pulled together to ensure no disruption of services occurred. In fact, this was no easy feat given that the Region was working with significant systems changes in the form of a rates system. Staff are to be commended for their upbeat and positive attitudes throughout this period of time.

#### **Corrections to Deficiencies—past review/year**

Quality Assurance Observations sheets from the previous review include the following: Objectives do not always match long range goals in the IP, objectives found from previous year in current file. Both of these issues were resolved satisfactorily. It is also noted that with the upcoming personal supports planning,

there may be additional changes to the IP process that will have to be addressed in the future.

A QAOS was submitted on 1/30/05 regarding a staff incident in the group home wherein a consumer was missing (and found to be at the home of a staff person several hours later). In order to prevent any future occurrence, the agency took immediate steps to overlap shifts by 15 minutes in order to ensure time for staff to complete checks and communicate any issues as necessary. The agency response was swift and appropriate, and included APS and law enforcement involvement.

#### **i. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

##### **Vehicles**

The agency has a comprehensive vehicle checklist that is run quarterly as part of ongoing safety reviews. It is far more comprehensive than anything required of this review and includes basically everything from oil and fluid checks to cleanliness, first aid kits and flares. Documentation clearly shows ongoing vehicle maintenance. **(QAOS 2)**

##### **Consumers**

There are currently 7 consumers living in the group home, 5 living at the Transitional Living Complex, and 2 in Supported Living services living in their own apartments in the community. A good portion of people served here have family members who are local or nearby and very involved in the program. Many of the folks in the program have very low skills, or medical issues that make them vulnerable to individuals with behavioral issues. This was apparent with one of the folks moved from MDC last fall. His behavioral issues created tremendous stress for the consumers and their families.

##### **Medication Safety (psychotropic meds, training, programs, PRN meds, certification, errors)**

Medications errors this past year have been largely documentation or missing medications issues. It is noted that staff have on several occasions identified medications errors (pharmacy errors, dosage errors) prior to the consumer ever receiving the medication, thereby prevention potentially harmful situations. Medications were secured in locked cabinets and there was adequate documentation of PRN protocols for headaches and minor illnesses, prescribed by the physician. It is *suggested* the agency look at the PRN protocols to insure that they are detailed enough to provide good direction to staff who may be unfamiliar with the individuals served, particularly the non-verbal folks. It is clearly demonstrated by existing staff that they know when to give the PRNs as currently written and there does not appear to be any health or safety issue at this time. However, should a situation arise in that veteran staff are not available, a more detailed protocol may assist prevent reliance on a new staff person's judgment regarding a medication. Staff signing off in the med books are noted to have current medication certification. **(QAOS 3)**

**Sites (appearance, evacuation drills, SL apartments, emergency back-up, etc.)**

#### **GROUP HOME**

The group home is relatively new and beautifully decorated. A pool table adorns the entry way to the home and provides leisure opportunities to folks that wish to play. The house is nicely decorated and very comfortable, sporting a large yard and a functional deck for summer evenings. The entries and exits were free of clutter or hazard despite the snow/sleet storm that was passing through at the time of my visit. The house is showing some signs of wear and tear (slight markings on the walls, or wallpaper trim, an indentation/damage to the wall near the tub in one bathroom). Water temp was 110 degrees at the time of the visit, consistent with the agency's own safety checks as documented in their files. It is noted that the group home has a scald guard on the water heater to ensure that there can be no hot water injuries to consumers. All cleaning supplies were locked appropriately. Individual tastes are certainly evident in the décor. The group does use 'house rules' which are reviewed and agreed to by the residents annually. Evacuation drills were evident across shifts and featured many different emergency situations in addition to fire such as illness, heart attack, tornado, severe weather, etc....

#### **TRANSITIONAL LIVING COMPLEX/SUPPORTED LIVING**

This supported living complex has the benefit of onsite staff for a portion of the morning and evening. The folks living here are very proud of their apartments and were eager to show off their homes. The apartments were clean and well kept if not lived in, and the consumers here look out for each other and are willing to help each other out as needed. Again the apartments were free of hazards and water temps in each of the apartments tested were well under 120 degrees. As previously mentioned, the agency has installed scald guards on the hot water heaters to further insure individual safety. Evacuation drills were evident across shifts and featured many different emergency situations in addition to fire such as illness, heart attack, tornado, severe weather, etc....

## **ii. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

### **Individual Planning (Assessment, implementation, monitoring)**

Individual planning in this agency is truly person-centered. The agency uses appropriate assessments and individual/family input to develop meaningful objectives for the people served here. The agency also goes to extra lengths to create supports where they otherwise may not exist. Quarterly reviews and amendment forms are routed to Quality Improvement Specialist and Case Manager in a timely and consistent manner.

**Leisure / Recreation**

Daily opportunities for leisure and weekly integrated opportunities were evident. Individual preferences were certainly taken into account with such leisure activities as puzzles, movies/videos, computers, games, music, and television. Community integration opportunities included many community events (rodeo, Christmas Stroll, bowling, Eaglemount activities and involvement with family and friends). It is noted that one supported living consumer is having a birthday blowout bash, complete with a band at the Country Club this spring—it should be the event of the season!

**Client Rights (restrictions/promotion of rights, grievance procedure)**

The grievance procedure is reviewed with each consumer at least annually at the time of his/her IP meeting. Rights restrictions are approved by the IP team and are generally pertaining to individual health and safety concerns. They are reviewed annually with plans in place to terminate the restriction where possible. Consumers report a good rapport with staff and believe their opinions and ideas are taken into consideration.

**Medical / health care**

Medical care is readily available in Choteau and is a strength of the program as well as the community. Folks with relatively fragile health concerns are well-served by the agency in part because the staff are so involved and in-tune to individual needs. There have been no reported concerns of medical issues being either un-identified or untreated. In fact, the agency is very solicitous of health issues and will not hesitate to transport an individual to medical care at the first sign of a potential problem.

Bathing procedures were posted as required, with clear direction to staff regarding precautions to take for folks with seizures as well as folks with more common hygiene issues. It is apparent that the agency attempts to balance consumer safety with dignity and offers as much independence as prudent

**Emotionally Responsible Care Giving**

Choteau staff provide excellence in caregiving. This is evident in the interactions with the consumers, and by the fact that the individuals served are happy and feel like they are part of their community. In addition to the philosophical components of ERC, the agency has also provided staff with training on the "Ethics of Touch" by David Hinsberger. (QAOS 4)

**Consumer Surveys /Agency's consumer satisfaction surveys (do you? what info? what do you do to address?) (Accreditation requirement)**

Consumer surveys were evident and were used in the development of agency as well as individual goals.

### **iii. STAFFING**

#### **Screening/Hiring**

Criminal Background Checks are completed on 100% of new hires.

#### **Orientation/training**

Choteau Activities utilizes a comprehensive employee training manual. Choteau has no intensive services and are not required to provide DDCPT Training. *Please note that if individuals coming from the Montana Developmental Center are screened to port vacancies or into regular openings, DDCPT or its equivalent will become a mandatory training component under the contract.* Staff records indicate DDOT, first aid, CPR, and MANDT (first three modules) are a consistent part of orientation for new hires and re-certifications as required for veteran staff. Training documentation is readily available for the core trainings as well as any additional training that the agency believes is necessary and pertinent to current consumer needs.

#### **Ratios**

As previously noted, ratios under the rates system are not what is expressed in Appendix I. For this past year, it is noted that health and safety needs of the consumers served by this agency have been met.

#### **Staff Surveys**

Choteau Activities staff surveyed by reviewers were able to answer questions accurately with little or no prompting.

### **iv. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

#### **Adult Protective Services**

APS staff report having four referrals this past year with one of those being significant (the missing consumer). In all cases, Adult Protective Services staff report the agency takes immediate steps to ensure consumer safety and does an excellent job of follow-up. It is also noted that the staff have an open relationship with Protective Services and call with questions or if there is any doubt whatsoever about whether an issue should be reportable,

#### **Incident Reporting**

As aforementioned, this agency has embraced the Incident Management Policy. Choteau has TWO trained investigators and consistently uses their data and trend analysis to not only address issues as they might arise, but to prevent future occurrences. There is truly an example of how the IM Policy was meant to be put into practice.

There are very few critical investigations out of this agency. At the beginning of the fiscal year, there were many related to an individual's behavioral outbursts and the domino effect of his behavior on other consumers in terms of injuries, and staff trying to protect the vulnerable. Since he has ported from

the agency, investigations can generally be attributed to illnesses/seizures causing hospitalizations—issues that would not be atypical to the folks living here.

**B. Work/Day/Community Employment Accomplishments**

This year, the agency opened the Full Circle Annex—a used furniture store that compliments the Full Circle thrift store. It is noted that the store was moved this year and that a Dutton student has recently started training there as part of a transition program from that school district. One staff person celebrated 20 years of employment at the day program this year—our heartfelt congratulations to her. It is noted that should she ever decide to leave Choteau, her skills in making pizza will likely help offset any retirement earnings! The agency also became a provider of Vocational Rehabilitation services this year and can now access VR dollars for people needing assistance with job placement through that program. **(QAOS 5)**

**Programmatic Deficiencies**

None were identified during the previous review and no QAOS sheets were written during this review period.

**I. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

**Vehicles**

Please see previous comments under residential.

**Consumers**

The folks served here are a boisterous and busy group of people. Whenever I visit the program, I am amazed at the level of social activity and camaraderie at the day program. Folks have the opportunity for many recreational and leisure activities from the day center, in addition to preferred activities such as playing cards, karaoke and various puzzles and games. On numerous occasions, I have observed the folks creating crafts and decorations for various holidays (the pumpkin paper roll center pieces as an example). The staff are very creative about offering meaningful activities where work is not generally available. Consumers also participate in janitorial tasks as well as work related to the thrift store.

**Medication Safety (psychotropics, training, programs, prns, certification, errors)**

Comments in the residential section apply here as well.

**Sites (appearance, evacuation drills, SL apartments, emergency back-up, etc.)**

Evacuation drills were evident across shifts and featured many different emergency situations in addition to fire such as illness, heart attack, tornado, severe weather, etc.... The activity center was free of hazards and is in good repair.



## **ii. SERVICE PLANNING AND DELIVERY**

### **Individual Planning (Assessment, implementation, monitoring)**

#### **Leisure / Recreation**

All consumers are involved in work or an activity of choice. Besides movies and exercise videos, consumers have to option to use the computers, play games, do puzzles, play cards or do craft activities. This group is active in Special Olympics (regional and state levels), talent shows, and entertainment for all ages (Cloggers, Performing Arts League, Sing-a-longs and community events)! As previously noted, agency staff are always looking for new ways to provide supports. One example is that of the swimming program at the Stage Stop Motel. Staff worked hard with the local business to eliminate insurance and other concerns in order to provide indoor swimming opportunities for individuals throughout the winter. Another exercise opportunity was developed which utilizes the elementary gym for walking and measuring the exercise with pedometers. **(QAOS 6)**

#### **Client Rights (restrictions/promotion of rights, grievance procedure)**

The grievance procedure is reviewed prior to each annual IP meeting with each consumer. Rights restrictions are agreed to by the IP team and training is in place to attempt removal of these restrictions, if possible.

#### **Medical / health care**

Please see previous comments.

#### **Emotionally Responsible Care Giving**

Staff persons are frequently listed on consumer surveys as being the 'my favorite person'. It is clear from observing interactions and consumer responses to staff that folks feel comfortable and offer a tremendous amount of respect to the people who live and work here. It truly appears to be a team effort at all levels of the agency—with consumers as integral members of that team.

#### **Consumer Surveys**

The CM completes a satisfaction survey with or on behalf of each consumer prior to his/her IP meeting. These are on file with the IP notes. Items that are noted in the surveys are often incorporated into the Individual Plan.

#### **Agency's consumer satisfaction surveys (do you? what info? what do you do to address?) (Accreditation requirement)**

Choteau Activities surveys staff members, families, and consumers and they use the findings to develop goals. Results are reported in the agency evaluation. Surveys are on file and were readily accessible to reviewers.

## **iii. STAFFING**

### **Screening/Hiring**

Please see previous comments.

**Orientation/training**

Please see previous comments.

**Ratios**

Please see previous comments.

**Staff Surveys**

Please see previous comments.

**iv. INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

**APS**

Please see previous comments.

**Incident Reporting**

Please see previous comments

**C. Community Supports**

Choteau Activities provides community supports to one individual at this time. That file was reviewed and found no inconsistencies with the services contracted or provided.

**Accomplishments**

This agency continues to create and tailor services based on individual needs—a definite plus to anyone wishing to be served on the Rocky Mountain front.

**Programmatic Deficiencies**

None were identified during the current review and no QAOS sheets were written during this review period. The previous review noted concerns for a CS consumer who has since ported services. The concern noted expenditures that would not be considered specific to the individual and may have been benefiting other family members. This concern was resolved prior to the consumer moving.

**Conclusion:**

This agency has many strengths not the least of which involve the overall level of involvement of individual staff persons and the offering services in a respectful and home-like environment. The hiring of a new CEO is also bringing about a new energy and excitement to Choteau. In just the last few months, the agency is already moving toward the future, looking for ways to increase visibility in the community, provide an expanded array of services and the possibility of providing services to other, non-developmentally disabled persons through other funding sources (personal care or assisted living or physically disabled waiver services). While it is understood that these ideas are in the very beginning stages of exploration, Choteau Activities is to be commended for being so proactive.